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Citation for published version:

Smith, A 2008, 'The Reach of Modern Life: Tynianov's Pushkin, Melancholy and the Critique of Modernity', *Wiener Slawistischer Almanach*, vol. 61, no. n/a, pp. 85-108. <http://periodika.digitale-sammlungen.de/wsa/Blatt_bsb00064689,00087.html?prozent=>>

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Wiener Slawistischer Almanach

Publisher Rights Statement:

© Smith, A. (2008). The Reach of Modern Life: Tynianov's Pushkin, Melancholy and the Critique of Modernity. Wiener Slawistischer Almanach, 61(n/a), 85-108

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“The Reach of Modern Life: Tynianov’s Pushkin, Melancholy and the Critique of Modernity”

This article proposes a new reading, through the prism of Yuri Tynianov’s unfinished novel *Pushkin*, of the aesthetics of the early and late Tynianov, and puts forward the idea of an epistemological shift. By looking in particular at the question of the centrality of the Pushkin myth to Tynianov’s theoretical and artistic oeuvre in the light of the Formalist project and its legacy, Tynianov’s understanding of literary evolution and the concept of the prelogical is re-examined. Tynianov’s concept of the prelogical, as discussed below, is linked in *Pushkin* to exploration of the pre-symbolic order and to inter-relation between visual and verbal signs that was exemplified by Pushkin’s artistic psychology. It is clear that primitive thinking informs Tynianov’s theoretical investigations as reflected in his last novel, yet the question remains: should we read Tynianov’s insistence on the importance of prelogical thought as politically and artistically regressive, or as an attempt to furnish the evolutionary literary model with a new way to link prelogical thought with dialectics? To this end, this article treats Sergei Eisenstein’s enthusiastic response to Tynianov’s novel as a perceptive reading of its subtexts and neo-Romantic sensibility that is close to Eisenstein’s own aesthetic aspirations of the 1930s-40s. Eisenstein’s reading of *Pushkin* as a narrative imbued with the protoplasmatic vision of evolution that foregrounds the image of the national poet as young, androgynous and infantile, competing with several father-like figures, helps us understand Tynianov’s semi-veiled call for the revival of a prenatal undifferentiated state of nature that is mediated through its opposite, namely analytical and progressive thought. Tynianov, like Eisenstein, seems to employ metaphors of biological time in relation to history presenting the tension between progressive and regressive tendencies as something that allows for a radical breakthrough in the spheres of subjective consciousness and of artistic creativity, as well as in public life.¹

Despite some perception that “scholarship about Pushkin as cultural myth began to appear in the 1980s”², we should not overlook Tynianov’s 1922 article “The Illusionary Pushkin” (“Mnimyi Pushkin”) which was published in the Soviet Union for the first time only in 1977. Tynianov’s article not only challenged the view of Pushkin as the founder of Russian national culture and as the public figure epitomised in Apollon Grigor’ev’s words “Pushkin is our everything” (1859), but it also criticised the cult of Pushkin that had been largely shaped by Russian symbolist, religious and philosophical abstract thinking. And more importantly, possibly in anticipation of attempts to canonise Pushkin in the Soviet political context, Tynianov’s article warned against the growing fetishism in literary studies related to Pushkin. With the meticulous precision and positivist bent that was the hallmark of his scholarship, Tynianov in “The Illusionary Pushkin” distinguished between on the one hand the popular efforts to make Pushkin fit the artistic and ideological goals found in journalism or philosophical discourses on literature, and on the other hand the representation of Pushkin’s life and works in Soviet literary studies. For Tynianov, to fall in step with the motto “Accept Pushkin and everything else will fall into its place!” (“Primitiv Pushkina, ostal’noe prilozhitsia”) did not undermine Pushkin provided that the discursive framework governing Pushkin’s suitability for any specific purpose accepted literature as an object for linguistic games and playful philosophical exercises. As Tynianov put it, “While the trend to make Pushkin suitable for any fashionable needs remains within the framework of general

philosophical meditations on literary themes that clearly view literature not as an object of study but as a playful tool, the formula *Pushkin is our everything* remains harmless”.³ Tynianov’s statement conveys the formalist concern with the principle of literary specifics (*literaturnost’*) which distinguishes literature as a medium from other aesthetic practices. In the words of Galin Tihanov, Russian Formalism was “inherently linked to the process of constructing a new state with a new political identity; and there was a neo-Romantic pride in belonging to the vanguard of these transformations”.⁴

Just as Edmund Husserl worked to identify the fundamental concepts which made science scientific, Tynianov worked to define specific literary qualities of literary texts. As Ian Aitken points out, Russian Formalism “rejected the subjectivism of the symbolist tradition in its attempt to identify the objective underlying structures of literature” and developed it “as a movement committed to an aesthetic of extended perceptual experience”.⁵ Indeed, highly significant for the formalists was the problematisation of subjectivity and experience through extending the process of perception. Yet it had to be reassessed and modified in the different social and political context of the 1920s. Aitken clarifies this ‘more politically engaged’ position thus: “It is this latter phase which is referred to by Roman Jakobson, when he argued that Russian formalism should not be associated with either ‘Kantian aesthetics’ or ‘*l’art pour l’art*’, but with an exploration of the ‘aesthetic function’. For Jakobson, within the domain of poetry such an exploration takes the form of a study of ‘poeticalness’: the (in Husserlian terms) ‘essence’ of the poetic-aesthetic system”.⁶ In a vein similar to Jakobson’s theoretical statements, Tynianov’s “The Illusionary Pushkin” aimed to undermine the authority of dominant ideological configurations by advocating the importance of a formalist exploration of aesthetic function and aesthetic systems. Tynianov’s reference to literary studies as an object of philosophical explorations and linguistic play resonates well with Jakobson’s warning that the sign should not be confused with the object. Jakobson’s redefinition of the formalist project, which attempts to defamiliarise experience through explorations of existing formations and development of alternative cultural constructs, is applicable to Tynianov’s attempt to differentiate between Pushkin as the sign of a scientific study and Pushkin its object.

Jakobson explains the necessity not to confuse the sign with the object thus: “Because alongside the immediate awareness of the identity of sign and object (A is A1), the immediate awareness of the absence of this identity (A is not A1) is necessary; this antinomy is inevitable, for without contradiction there is no play of concepts, there is no play of signs, the relation between the concept and the sign becomes automatic, the course of events ceases and consciousness of reality dies”.⁷ In Jakobson’s opinion, the signs do not refer to themselves, nor do they cease to refer at all. Jakobson suggests that more emphasis should be put on the signs themselves than on their reference: yet they are not thereby self-referential, nor are they thereby non-referential. Jakobson theoretical model reveals the palpability of signs and their materiality and paths the way to a discovery of their conventional, as opposed to natural, origin. According to Jakobson, in literary communication the referential function of signs is suppressed owing to its lesser importance compared with some other functions.⁸

Tynianov’s “The Illusionary Pushkin” also questions the referentiality of signs. In it Tynianov expresses concern for the growing area of scholarship produced under the label “Pushkin studies” lacking in rigour due to the gap between traditional forms of literary analysis and the explorations of Pushkin’s life and writings in the

form of popular biographies, anecdotes and semi-fictional accounts of his life. Tynianov's comments on this new phenomenon included acute observations on the substitution of objective literary analysis by fetishist and ideologically biased scholarship that portrays Pushkin as the father of Russian literature. For example Tynianov pointed out that Pushkin studies scholars were sometimes unscholarly and misrepresented Pushkin's role in Russian cultural history as exceptional. Tynianov affirms: "There is no need to look at all the literary developments that happened before Pushkin's times as if they served as a preparatory ground for the emergence of Pushkin and as if they were erased by Pushkin altogether. It is also wrong to view all subsequent literature as literature that either developed Pushkin's art or fought against it. Such a naive theologism leads to the complete distortion of historical perspective. It makes *all* literature that holds Pushkin as its trademark look meaningless, presenting Pushkin as an incomprehensible miracle. Literary scholarship that deals with the history of literature should abandon fetishism, preserving nonetheless the system of values related to various events".⁹ Tynianov aimed most attacks in "Illusionary Pushkin" at those scholars, notably Nikolai Lerner, who were obsessed with quantitative analysis. To Tynianov, scholars preoccupied with bibliographical data tended to ignore those texts published under Pushkin's name that might have been penned by others, out of literary mystification or prankishness. More importantly, Tynianov's article offered a remedy against the habitualised reproduction of the mythologised image of Pushkin by exposing it as a cultural construct that derives from a politically charged discursive practice. Tynianov suggests a redesign of Pushkin studies in accordance with the formalist principle of literary analysis favouring rigorous approach to literary texts. Tynianov assumed that the formalist exploration of the aesthetic function of Pushkin's works would exclude the speculative accounts of Pushkin's life found in mass culture.¹⁰ It is clear that Tynianov's article advocates the investigation of the emergence of styles and dynamic relationships between several schools of thought and downplays any preoccupation with naturalism or representation of everyday life in the style of classical realist novels.

The approach to literary studies and fictionalised biographies manifested in "Illusionary Pushkin" challenged the old-fashioned concept of writer's biography oriented towards the tedious chronologically organised reconstruction of minute details of everyday life and bibliographical data. This approach stemmed from Soviet Russia's new attitudes to everyday life. It was widely reported in Russian memoirs that 1920s post-revolutionary Soviet society drastically altered the country's everyday life (byt) and the general outlook of writers and artists. Thus the memoirs of Grigorii Kozintsev, who in 1926 worked closely with Tynianov on the film adaptation of Gogol's story "Overcoat" ("Shinel"), and who felt strong affinity with Tynianov's theoretical and creative principles, stated that Soviet avant-garde artists believed that the 1917 revolution radically changed their worldview and set new vantage points from which to cognise life. Kozintsev encapsulated their standpoint thus: "This is why everyday life was rejected at this time with such irreconcilability. Was it really possible to become an artist in the epoch of world-wide revolutionary upheaval only to copy the trifling, to retell the ordinary? Anything but naturalism, anything but everyday life! It was under this slogan that our new generations of cinematographers began to work".¹¹ Alastair Renfrew noted that Tynianov's script written for Kozintsev's film *Overcoat* might be viewed as "an ambivalent response to the vogue for literary adaptations that was in a sense the natural consequence of the literary campaign in the mid-1920s, and which, to some extent, invoked the risk of

compromising the drive to develop a specifically cinematic language that united the otherwise disparate elements of the Soviet avant-garde".¹² Renfrew's observation on the drive to develop specific non-literary modes of expression that rely on literature needs to be extended further.

Tynianov's transgressive qualities as writer and critic may have allowed him to switch easily from literary to cinematic modes of expression, and to appropriate in his literary works Shklovsky's notion of estrangement in a new way. Many 1920-30s writers, including Veniamin Kaverin and Tynianov, in their mixing of cinematic with literary devices replaced the linear representation of events with narratives containing the labyrinth-like simultaneous flow of time, which Deleuze aptly defines as the time-image.¹³ Shklovsky's theoretical writings present poetry as a mode of artistic expression that renews symbols and habitualised forms of speech by transforming them into intense perceptual experiences. According to Shklovsky, the quality of a poem depends therefore not on its ability to cognise reality through symbolic meanings, but on the concrete forms in which symbols are realised. As Shklovsky puts it, "the purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known".¹⁴ Shklovsky explains his vision of art in specifically formalist terms: "The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important."¹⁵ To paraphrase, a poem's success lies not in richness of symbols per se, but in the ways in which their concrete realisation takes place relative to our expectations of poetic language. According to Shklovsky, poetic speech bears some marks that are created to remove the automatism of perception: "A work is created 'artistically' so that its perception is impeded and the greatest possible effect is produced through the slowness of the perception".¹⁶ Yet, while Shklovsky might be seen as a scholar who insisted on forward-looking poetics, Tynianov stands out as a scholar more interested in the reusable past.

Examination of Tynianov's literary output of the 1920-30s, including his stories and his unfinished novel *Pushkin*, suggests that Tynianov sought new aesthetic principles and ways to represent a historical vision of reality newly focused upon concepts of stylisation and reproduction of artefacts in the age of modernity. Such a vision allowed for the prolonged process of perception. Such formalist approach to the reception of artefacts that centres on the artificiality of the object would allow for the object's perception in its continuity, and not in its relation to space. Tynianov's theoretical statements and literary experiments exhibit his attempt to break up the boundaries of chronologically organised narrative structure and linear representation of time in order to create the concept of simultaneity that helps juxtapose two different epochs creatively and cinematically. This way of approaching Pushkin as an artefact allows prolonged, continuous experience of dialogue with Pushkin.

Tynianov's vision of Pushkin's omnipresent significance in Russian everyday life underpins his view that Soviet literature should be taking the principle of heteroglossia seriously. Tynianov is clearly urging Soviet writers to produce the stylistic diversity in their texts that would enable the evolutionary mechanisms of literature to function efficiently. Tynianov's own fiction was an exemplary model for such experimental treatment of temporality. Indeed, many Soviet critics were sensitive to the ornamental and experimental qualities of Tynianov's fiction. Naum Berkovsky's 1930 review of Tynianov's novel *The Death of Wazir Mukhtar* (*Smert' Vazira Mukhtara*), for example, suggests that "Tynianov does not so much write as

create montages” and that “the facts within each chapter are superbly collated”, to the effect that “the method of juxtaposing one fact with another results in striking expressivity”.¹⁷ To put it differently, the principle of cinematic-like montaging permitted Tynianov to reinterpret Russian contemporary history in Bergsonian terms, as a collage of simultaneously existing models of reality. It is not coincidental that Tynianov throughout the 1920s also sought out analogies between modern literature and Cubist painting.¹⁸

According to Katerina Clark, Tynianov and the other writers of the 1920s-30s who were concerned with the Decembrist legacy treated 1825 as an allegorical potential for expressing their own critique of Stalin’s Russia. Clark observes that the 1825 revolt is depicted in the Soviet fiction of Stalin’s times as “a nodal point leading to the 1830s and 1840s, that is, to Nikolaevan Russia, which became a particular obsession around this time as an exemplum, generally presented in the grotesque mode, of stagnation, bureaucratism, obtuseness, and provincialism”.¹⁹ Drawing on the work of Clark and Mikhail Gasparov, Liudmilla Trigos states that Tynianov discerned an analogy between the Pushkin’s times and Soviet Russia: “His representation of the failed revolt’s results— the loss of the progressive members of the Russian elite and the subsequent overall degradation of Russian society — certainly anticipates the growing persecution and destruction of the non-Bolshevik intelligentsia during the 1920-30s”.²⁰

A most interesting example of montaging is found in the concluding part of Tynianov’s novel which brings together Griboedov and Pushkin. Tynianov describes how Pushkin, en route to Arzrum in the Caucasus, encountered a carriage with decomposed corpses, including Griboedov’s. Pushkin was told that a ring on a corpse’s severed hand belonged to Griboedov. An old man, wanting to respect the dead writer’s body, thought the hand ought to be returned to its owner and suggested that Pushkin reattach the hand with the ring to the remains of any of the bodies, in order to create a person called Griboed. According to the old man, one’s identity is determined by one’s name, and he said to Pushkin: “His name should be located over there. Take something from here that goes with this name” (“Tam dolzhno lezhat’ ego imia, i ty voz’mi zdes’ to, chto bolee vsego podkhodit k etomu imeni”).²¹ The description of the unusual meeting with Griboedov’s corpse concludes with a meditation on the immortality of poetic speech and sublime signature. Tynianov’s Pushkin contemplates Griboedov’s death and observes that Griboedov, having finished his play *Woe from Reason* (“Gore ot uma”), had nothing left to do in his life, so he died instantly and beautifully, as if he had understood and accomplished with dignity his mission as a writer. According to Dragan Kujundzic, Tynianov ascribed historical significance to the meeting between Griboedov’s body and Pushkin, establishing thereby a literary genealogical bond between the two authors.²²

Kujundzic’s states that in Tynianov’s *The Death of Wazir Mukhtar* we can observe how Griboedov’s posthumous fame grew as a result of Pushkin’s grief (“So skorbi Pushkina nachinaetsia posmertnaia slava Griboedova”)²³ and this implies that the narrative contains a melancholic discourse. Tynianov’s desire for his readers to visualise Griboedov’s handless corpse might be also seen as an attempt to present the author’s death symbolically, demonstrating that any creative writing is an act of estrangement. Griboedov’s hand is inscribed into Tynianov’s text as a symbolic object associated with creative writing, a symbol of writing per se, evoking Orpheus whose head continued to sing after death. Unlike Tsvetaeva, who compared Blok and Pushkin to Orpheus in order to advocate the immortalisation of the vocal powers of speech, Tynianov emphasised the importance of craftsmanship and introduced the

notion of interaction between visual arts and writing. Tynianov's text suggests that the hand, to function as a writing tool, requires the name of an author who could ensure its vitality. Tynianov's representation of Pushkin's subsequent melancholic recollection of the episode that empowered him with Griboedov's writing tool is linked to the question of the physical and symbolic death of an author.

Arguably, Tynianov's description of Pushkin's encounter with Griboedov's corpse also illustrates the process of creative evolution outlined in those works of Henri Bergson and Tynianov which emphasise the vitality of the creative impulse. Tynianov develops Bergson's model further and suggests that the modern artist, who approaches text as collection of devices, should borrow the tools of literary craftsmanship from his predecessors through a certain ritual that entwines performance, imagination and religious thinking. Although Kujundzic does not dwell on the significance of the performative aspects of Tynianov's description of Pushkin's taking Griboedov's hand, he valuably observes Tynianov's position as a writer-scholar who assembles existing artefacts and reconstructs facts and images from the past: "Tynianov's novel employs two sources of creative energy simultaneously: one of them is the decomposed body of Griboedov and another one is the disfigured body of Pushkin's narrative. It moves towards its goal, inspired by the mnemonic reconstruction of the past that empowers Tynianov's own text. Tynianov's text is presented therefore as a copy of the original, prepared by a clerk who borrows the writing hand from the narrator possessing the hand that belonged to Griboedov and Pushkin".²⁴

Kujundzic's comment on Tynianov's attempt to revive literary tradition and reconnect with the Russian creative spirit of the Romantic period fails to explain the linkage between Tynianov's interest in the symbolic connotations of the Pushkin-Griboedov encounter and the theme of Griboedov's spiritual castration. Thus, might the scene depicting Griboedov's revelation to police informer Faddei Bulgarin that Griboedov feels as silent as a grave be interpreted as an expression of Tynianov's own melancholy and elegiac mourning at the death of oratorical speech in the face of tightening censorship in Stalin's Russia? In his seminal 1922 study "The ode as an oratorical genre" ("Oda kak oratorskii zhanr") Tynianov explores literary process as a struggle of genres in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He also comments on Russian literature of the 1920s: "In our time we can observe an analogous struggle of genres: between Maiakovsky's new 'satirical ode' and Esenin's new 'elegy' (of the romance type) [V.V. Maiakovsky, 1894-1930; S. Esenin, 1895-1925]. In the struggle between these two genres we can observe the same struggle for the orientation of poetic discourse".²⁵ Given that Tynianov links himself to Pushkin as successor of Griboedov the comedy author, we might assume that Tynianov's novel *The Death of Wazir Mukhtar* contains a cryptic allusion to literary struggles of the 1920s, and elaborate on Tynianov's theoretical points related to his notion of dynamic literary evolution. In his work on Dostoevsky and Gogol published in 1921, Tynianov develops the view that parody is a catalyst of literary change that accelerates the evolution of forms by automatising outworn devices, while simultaneously promoting a new organisation of material. His concept of the dual effect of parody — destructive and reconstructive — is illustrated with numerous examples of his fictionalised accounts of Pushkin's life. It is not surprising, therefore, that Tynianov's novels address the question of Pushkin's creative employment of the usable past.

Kujundzic's above mentioned observations on the image of an author skilled at copying his predecessors' texts might be easily extended to the analysis of Tynianov's unfinished novel *Pushkin* (1935-43) which was partially published in

1935-37 in the Leningrad journal *Literaturnyj sovremennik* (Literary Contemporary), and in 1943 in the journal *Znamia* (Banner). The novel contains all the important tenets on cultural developments held by Tynianov and Shklovsky, including that opposing schools of aesthetic thought coexist, and that new genres are mutations or combinations of old ones. More importantly, Tynianov's image of Pushkin strongly resembles Vassily Rozanov whom Shklovsky portrayed in 1921 as a master of stylistic masks and of oxymoronic discourse, and as a skilful trickster who could present a well known object or cliché in alternative contexts in new light. Shklovsky's Rozanov, embodying a monstrous-looking new type of poet, is encapsulated in this statement of Rozanov: "I have big round eyes and I lick my lips. Isn't it disgusting? So what."²⁶ In similar vein Tynianov portrays the young Pushkin as a monkey whose unexpected, brief, infectious and discontinuous laughter was easily imitated by his lycée friend Iakovlev.²⁷ Tynianov links the monkey image to Pushkin's ability to imitate life, even claiming that it was the monkey who resembled Pushkin, not the other way round. Thus Tynianov emphasised Pushkin's skill at parody in order to make his point that artistry, estrangement and mimicry are essential for literary evolution. Tynianov's Pushkin is capable of adopting various speech codes and modes of behaviour, sometimes choosing to disguise himself as an anonymous author or to take part in literary mystifications. More importantly, the juxtaposition between the young Pushkin and the monkey image, advocates the necessity to inscribe the protoplasmatic state into modern consciousness. Tynianov's monkey-like image of the young Pushkin represents the prehistoric ideal shaped by the originary prehuman state which manifests itself as superhuman. In the scenes from the novel mentioned above, Tynianov, dwells on the question of identity understood by him in transgressive terms, as he does in many other instances in *Pushkin*.

Thus, the end of Tynianov's novel depicts Pushkin in the Crimea: Pushkin thinks to send an elegy to Petersburg with the request that his brother Lev publishes it anonymously, for "one does not need to use a name in poetry, just like in a battle" ("v poezii, kak v boiu ne nuzhno imia").²⁸ Tynianov juxtaposed the notion of impersonal poetic discourse with the statement (ascribed in the novel to Pushkin) that "life flows like poetic speech" ("zhizn' idet, kak stikh").²⁹ Tynianov appears eager to mould Pushkin into the image of Rozanov, whose writing employed confessional modes of speech and a liking for the photographic reproduction of facts as stylistic devices. Like Shklovsky who welcomed Rozanov's heroic attempt to escape from literary discourse into a different type of communication — one without form or words, Tynianov's Pushkin switched easily from verbal modes of expression into visual ones, revealing thereby his fluid identity and his detachment from life. His homeliness is conveyed in terms suggesting that every aspect of modern life had become charged with the corrosive freedom of irony, that things could be taken at face-value no longer. Throughout the novel Tynianov depicted Pushkin as lamenting the loss of his house in Moscow (burnt down in the Napoleonic war) and trying to become accustomed to his homeless self, encapsulated in his father's words "Pushkins are vagabonds" ("Pushkiny pustodomy"). Tynianov's Pushkin accepts his father's characterisation of the whole family as a bunch of "pilgrims, vagabonds, homeless people, who lost their house to fire"³⁰ as a natural way of life for poets whose destiny was to be always unhappy, as he learnt from Kiukhel'becker and Russian elegies.³¹ It is not difficult to see that Tynianov's Pushkin resembles both Tynianov and Shklovsky, who valued estrangement as a way of life and a modern way of creative thinking.

Questions of identity and creative writing are highlighted throughout *Pushkin*. On several occasions we see a Pushkin copying the texts of other authors and practising his signature in various styles, experimenting even with cryptic messages that represent his name. The image of writing Pushkin is equated here to the writing tool, in the manner of the detached nameless hand found in the novel on Griboedov. Thus chapter 5 portrays Pushkin as a young scholar and poet fascinated by the construction of identities linked to a symbolic order determined by language. *Pushkin* also entwines religious and creative aspects by making Pushkin into a young monk-scholar. The linguistic experiments of Pushkin featured in the novel involve writing various signatures and are imbued with mystical overtones, as in this example: “Alexander loved his signature. He practised his official signature, using paraphe; it was a brief version of his name comprising only one or two letters written upside down: NKShP. Sometimes he used numbers for his signature: 14 represented his ID number in the lycée’s registration papers; on other occasions he used 1, 14, 16 in accordance with the order of letters included in his first and last names: the first number corresponded to the first letter of his name and the last one corresponded to the first letter of his surname. Once, having made copies of his poems, he looked at his draft and remembered his grandfather’s twisted monument; he then signed his poems as Hannibal. Such a diversity of names and signatures amazed him. It seemed to him that he adopted a new image with each new name he used. He liked the mysterious and false names in his father’s office notebooks. The author hid himself behind letters, numbers, anagrams. People argued about him and guessed.” (“Aleksandr liubil svoiu podpis’. On podpisysvalsia *ofitsial’no*, s parafom, kratko, odnoi, dvumia bukvami, perevertnem: NKShP, nomerom 14 – po svoemu litseiskomu numeru, tsiframi 1...14...16... — po mestu bukv: pervaiia bukva imeni i konechnaia s nachal’noi – familii: A.N. P. Odnazhdy, perepisav svoi stikhi, on vspomnil, gliadia na svoi chernovik, koriavyi dedovskii pamiatnik i podpisalsia: Annibal. Eto raznoobrazie imen i podpisei bylo dlia nego udivitel’no: kazhdyi raz ne tol’ko imia, kazalos’ emu, — on sam prinimal novyi vid. Emu nraivilis’ zagadochnye i lozhnye imena v tetradiakh otsovskogo biuro. Avtor priatalsia za bukvami, tsiframi, anagrammami. O nem sporili, gadali.”).³² This allusion to Pushkin’s ancestors — the Hannibals — stemmed from Tynianov’s long-standing interest in Pushkin’s African heritage and its implications for Russian cultural development as reflected in his unfinished 1932 novel “The Hannibals” (“Gannibaly”). As Trigos puts it, “for Tynianov, ‘Gannibality’ serves as a life force, a positive, creative energy that invigorates the stultifying elements of Russian culture and life”.³³

On the one hand, Tynianov appears eager to demystify the mystery of writing; on the other hand his linking of imaginary identities to the existing symbolic order and names is rooted in the Russian tradition of *imiaslavie*, known sometimes as onomatodoxy. The main tenets of this spiritual teaching are epitomised in the book *On the Caucasus Mountains*, penned by the Russian monk Hilarion, who said that God’s name constitutes God himself and in itself is capable of producing miracles. The spiritual experience that deeply moved Pushkin on his way to Arzrum seems to allude to *On the Caucasus Mountains* that had been banned in Russia since 1912. The episode has a parodic touch, referring to the many Russian monk-imiaslavtsy who believed that knowledge of the secret name of God could produce miracles. The mysterious effect that the names Griboed and Hannibal had on Pushkin is presented in Tynianov’s narratives as a manifestation of the divine principle that ensures the flow of creative impulse. Trigos, in her analysis of Tynianov’s unfinished 1933 novel “The Gannibals” (Gannibaly), which was meant to be an epic introduction to the biography

of Pushkin, observes that Tynianov encapsulated Pushkin's personal search for identity with his literary activity. Trigos claims that "Tynianov bestows full responsibility upon Pushkin for the incorporation of [...] exotic lands and their people into Russian culture".³⁴ According to Trigos, Tynianov recalled the rhetoric of Dostoevsky's 1880 Pushkin speech and depicted Pushkin as cultural coloniser who discovers exotic lands, portrays them and then lays claim to them.

Such an observation notwithstanding, I would point out that in both the novels *Pushkin* and *The Death of Wazir Mukhtar* Tynianov presents Pushkin as a poet-ethnographer preoccupied with the philosophy of language. Tynianov's novels elaborate views of his on the philosophy of language that are akin to Gustav Shpet's assertions on the inner form of word and manifestations of psychology through language. Indeed, Tynianov explained that his novel *Pushkin* was not intended to be a fictionalised biography, but rather an epic novel to illustrate the development of Russian national poet whose life and creating activities were inseparable from national historical development.³⁵ This approaches Shpet's views as expressed in his seminal study "Introduction to Ethnic Psychology" ("Vvedenie v eticheskuiu psikhologiiu", 1919-21). According to Shpet, national consciousness comprises a special type of emotional experience based on the appropriation of various historical and social events, interactions and juxtapositions with other nations. For Shpet, each individual acquires, from knowledge of his native language and through communication with others, tools of cognition of the collective spiritual experience expressed in language. Shpet writes: "Each individual is a sui generis of collective experiences; his own emotional experiences are shaped by the whole group of responses to life and experiences that amount to the group of collective experiences shared both by his contemporaries and ancestors".³⁶ Shpet defines this collection of archetypal knowledge as spiritual order (*dukhovnyi uklad*). Indeed, in the novel "The Hannibals" Tynianov's image of the Bashkir singing Tatiana's letter to Onegin in his own elusive language provides a Shpetian insight into the philosophy of language associated with the mechanism of expression of ethnic psychology through language. Tynianov's Bashkir speaks the language that reflects on his ethnic group's interactions with other subjects of the Russian empire. By the same token, Tynianov's Pushkin cognises the experiences of his own family and of Russian history through linguistic explorations associated with the name Hannibal and such words as 'little blackamoor' ("malen'kii arapchonok").

In addition to the above mentioned Shpetian overtones of Tynianov's narrative, Pushkin's scholarly pursuits — as manifested in Tynianov's *Pushkin* — recall episodes in Tynianov's own career. An epigram written by Tynianov in the early 1920s rhymes Arzamas with OPOIAZ and explores analogies between the two epochs.³⁷ In other words, Tynianov's depiction of Pushkin's lycée training that helped the young poet acquire the philological tools to cognise reality, to demystify the process of writing and to understand the construction of identities through language has strong analogy with Tynianov's own training at St Petersburg University. David Bethea in his "Introduction" to *Pushkin Handbook* lists Tynianov among the twentieth-century thinkers who complemented the positivists and "provided important new ways to conceptualise Pushkin".³⁸ Bethea characterises Tynianov as a Pushkinist and Pushkin period novelist, but does not mention at this point that Tynianov's career was marked by his active participation in Semen Vengerov's seminars. However, Bethea names Vengerov (1855-1920) as a scholar who collaborated with other eminent scholars, Pushkin biographers and writers of his day in order to produce a lavish six-volume edition of Pushkin's writings that was published in 1907-15. In his

posthumously published autobiography, Tynianov describes his studies at St Petersburg University in 1912-18 and pays a special tribute to Vengerov. Tynianov presents Vengerov as a Derzhavin-like figure who gave his blessing to Tynianov's research activities: "I began studying Griboedov and was appalled at how poorly he was understood, at how little resemblance there was between all that Griboedov wrote and all that had been written about him by literary historians [...]. I read a paper on Kiukhel'becker. Vengerov perked up and applauded. Thus began my work."³⁹ Indeed, the lives and writings of Griboedov, Kiukhel'becker and Pushkin continued to serve as subject matter for Tynianov scholarship and novels throughout his career. Dmitrii and Zinaida Breschinsky, in their 1985 article on Tynianov, validly observe that Tynianov's interest in the Pushkinian era might be due to his interest in the historical epoch that was split into two different political periods by the 1825 Decembrist revolt. According to these scholars, while Tynianov's *Pushkin* covers only the poet's lycée years, his *Kiukhlia* and *The Death of Wazir Mukhtar* "cannot be understood apart from the events of 14 December 1825".⁴⁰ They suggest reading the latter two novels as a diptych and summarise their plotline thus: "If *Kiukhlia* concerns the idealistic young men of the early 1820s destroyed in the insurrection, *The Death of Wazir Mukhtar* deals with the cynics and the politically wise parvenus of the rebellion's aftermath — *the men of the 1830s*".⁴¹

In addition to the above observations on the various political connotations of Tynianov's fiction, I will now briefly explore the type of training that Tynianov received from his mentor Vengerov and outline some striking similarities between Vengerov and several of the teachers whose influence on Pushkin's creative outlook was significant and who are presented in the novel as monks or monk-like scholars. This brief insight into Tynianov's own creative psychology helps us understand the personal mythology which he linked to the image of the scholar-monk and which he projected onto Pushkin. Given that Vengerov advocated Benedictine monkishness (*benediktinstvo*) in literary scholarship and praised Gogol as a writer-scholar, it is no surprise that in Tynianov's *Pushkin* the theme of labour and rigorous training, which in Vengerov's view was essential for creative writing, is given such an extensive treatment.

As Andy Byford explains, "the noble image of the true scholar as the modest and hard-working 'monk' turns out to be Vengerov's own contrivance".⁴² Byford links Vengerov's positivist attempt to present literary activities as akin to monastic labour and to the growing desire of many Russian scholars in the 1910s to legitimise literary scholarship. Byford explains: "Love and labour as the two principal components of the notion of *benediktinstvo*, served not only to legitimise literary scholarship as an autonomous intellectual pursuit, but also to negotiate relations on the (necessarily) 'fuzzy' boundary of professional literary academia".⁴³ Tynianov's novel *Pushkin* challenges Vengerov's view that Pushkin's early poetry was an adolescent product and therefore inferior to his later writings. Vengerov, an editor of Pushkin's works, found the process of publishing Pushkin's 'lycée verse' difficult because Pushkin revised his poems in 1826. Vengerov felt that as historian-editor he should have published Pushkin's early verse in its authentic form, but he chose the role of the aesthete-editor. In Shpetian vein, Tynianov's novel convincingly demonstrates that Pushkin's personal experiences as expressed in his early poems should be read in their authentic form and in language enabling readers to be infected by the immediacy of their emotions.

Should we view therefore Tynianov's whimsical interest in deficiencies in Pushkin's style and inferior works as another manifestation of the baroque aspect of

Tynianov's personality, as Mikhail Iampol'skii describes?⁴⁴ According to Iampol'skii, Tynianov's aesthetic principles, as usually reflected in his fiction, surpassed the discursive practices of Russian Formalists and other avant-garde theoreticians and thinkers. Iampol'skii suggests that Tynianov's widely known concepts highlighting the role of archaic elements, stylistic masks and parody in literary evolution were influenced by Heinrich Heine's vision of the modern artist who adopts parodic masks hiding empty superficial references to Hellenistic, Judaeo-Christian and aristocratic cultural paradigms.⁴⁵ Commenting on Tynianov's interest in the Romantic reinvention of the past and the sense of simultaneous existence in two historical epochs, Iampol'skii emphasises Tynianov's interest in Heine's depiction of landscapes that juxtaposes living nature with dead and false artefacts resulting in an oxymoronic representation of reality. In Iampol'skii's view, Tynianov's article on Heine rejects Platonic aesthetics in favour of Heine's semantic collisions and contradictions that playfully function to produce a parodic representation of several stylistic masks. Iampol'skii's analysis of Tynianov's story "The Waxen Figure" ("Voskovaia persona") points to Tynianov's obsessive interest in the mechanisms of mimicry and cultural reproduction. Iampol'skii suggests that the image of a monster found in Tynianov's fiction is related to Tynianov's concept of distorted mirror images of masks and reflections that are constructed in accordance with the principle of anamorphose. This implies that copying an image leads to its complete distortion through a special form of coding; its reconstruction involves decoding.⁴⁶

Iampol'skii's observations could be easily extended to Tynianov's novel *Pushkin* in which the many contradictions of Pushkin's personality are highlighted. Indeed, Tynianov draws our attention to Pushkin's oxymoronic vision of reality that stems from the poet's ability to cognise life as a dynamic organic system that encompasses contradictory forces and unrelated artefacts. As an example, one episode depicts the draft copy of Pushkin's poem "Monk" ("Monakh") filled with sketches by Pushkin. Tynianov writes: "His hellish poem about the monk was complete. It was done in truly devilish parodic manner; it depicted tricks of various devils who seduced monks; a white skirt appealed to one monk; one monk who was flying above the Devil. He drew on the manuscript a monkey-like head resembling an old woman wearing a scarf. It was a portrait of Voltaire, evoking the playful spirit of his poem *Virgin*".⁴⁷ This episode complexly juxtaposes several images including the allusion to Barkov whose erotic poetry Pushkin had read at a young age and whom he imagined as a tall, monstrous looking man holding an axe. Tynianov says that Pushkin wanted to draw his portrait but could not visualise him before seeing a visual representation. Here we see a strange type of vision ascribed to a Pushkin who could see beyond the visible and somehow could reconstruct the images of authors through their poems. Furthermore, the Voltaire image mentioned in this episode implies that this image is used by Pushkin for the duration of his creative activity as a mask to reflect images from the outside. In other words, Tynianov alludes here to the motif of the mimetic representation of the void which was important to the Baroque art.⁴⁸

Taking into account the prominent place that Tynianov ascribes to Pushkin's melancholic walks, elegies and recollections in the novel *Pushkin*, I think Iampol'skii's observations might be linked to the representation of melancholic discourse in the novel. It appears that the concepts of mimicry, void and melancholy are inseparable from Tynianov's image of Pushkin. Tynianov's Pushkin accepts his melancholic isolation in the face of the double infinity of external and internal space as the truth of modernity that leads people to a lonely and homeless existence. Several passages in the novel dwell on the melancholy that came into its own as the

immediate experience of modern life; melancholics perceived the contradiction between ephemerality and infinity. We can recall, for example, how Shelling describes a new mournful sensibility as the pervasive sentiment of modernity in which individuals realise their distance from God. He states that “a veil of sadness is spread over all nature” to the effect that “the darkest and deepest ground in human nature is melancholy” adding that “nature also mourns a lost god”.⁴⁹ For Tynianov, representation of the inner life as a realm of infinite freedom and the self-absorption of melancholy was linked to the emergence of the new function of the poetic discourse. Tynianov’s Pushkin embodying the melancholic spirit is a self-moving and self-determining individual, possessed of mobility and inner life that lies at the root of the experience of melancholy. In the concluding part of Tynianov’s novel we see a Pushkin who mourns not only his youth, his house, his lycée, his unrequited love for Karamzina but everything of which he was deprived. As Tynianov put it, “As if he was cursed, he was moving in a boat, not daring to name her; he was moving on, full of energy, inspired by the recollection of everything that was forbidden and that was not meant to be” (“chto bylo zapretno i chto sbyt’sia ne moglo”).⁵⁰ Tynianov’s passage evokes Goethe’s early poems that dramatize melancholic consciousness and are permeated with the pathos of the unattained sublime, suggesting that fruitful engagement with the world becomes problematic for any creator infected by a new mournful sensibility.

In other words, by the novel’s end Tynianov fashions a young Pushkin in the clothes of a young Goethe, thus highlighting the presence of the melancholic voice in his poetry. Tynianov writes: “He knew: every time when he will write about her, the darkness of the night or the gloomy sea (just like now) will serve as the witness of his writing. And his love that was impossible to cure, that stayed with him for ever, reminded him of a wound; the wound which the old Raevsky knew well: he was fond of his doctor for the fact that he was not deluding him about the impossibility of cure of his illness”. (“On znal: kogda budet pisat’ o nei, svidetelem vsegda budet nochnaia mgla ili, kak teper’, — ugriumoe more. I eta ego liubov’, — kotoruiu izlechit’ bylo nevozmozhno, kotoraiia byla s nim vsegda, napominala tol’ko ranu, ranu, kotoruiu luchshe vsegda znal staryi Raevskii, liubivshii svoego lekaria za to, chto tot ne teshit ego nadezhdami na istscelenie”).⁵¹ Autobiographical overtones in Tynianov’s narrative, easily detected in this passage, allude to Tynianov’s own illness. However, the most important attack launched by Tynianov in the concluding part of his novel is upon time. He presents Pushkin’s exile in the south as a desirable displacement that provides him with the meditative space and healing experiences that help to recuperate the lost object through the repetitive ritual of writing: “And here he was writing an elegy about the impossible love of which time had deprived him” (“I zdes’ on pisal elegiiu o liubvi nevozmozhnoi, v kotoroi emu otkazalo vremia”).⁵² The theme of unrequited love that is linked in Tynianov’s novel with a young Pushkin evokes the image of Goethe’s Werther, the suicidal protagonist of his 1774 autobiographical novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (*Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*) as well as Boris Pasternak’s lines from the 1922 cycle “Separation” (‘Razryv’) which has: “Go to others. *Werther* has been written already./ Nowadays the air is filled with death. /To open one’s window is like cutting one’s veins”. (“Razryv”): (“Stupai k drugim. Uzhe napisan Verter. /A v nashi dni i vozdukh pakhnet smert’iu./ Otkryt’ okno — chto zhily otvorit’.”).⁵³ Certainly, the Werther image might be seen as an important subtext of Tynianov’s novel that alludes to the harsh reality of Stalin’s totalitarian regime.

If we remember that Tynianov wrote his novel in Stalin's Russia, can we treat it as a philosophical novel that rebelled against attempts of Soviet modernity to vanquish melancholy as the normal state of human heart? Stalin's vision of modernity had a spiritless disregard of the human urge towards self-transcendence, and asserted that life should be reduced to the satisfaction of artificially created and stimulated desires. Just as modern society often perceives religion both as melancholic and as a cure for melancholy, for Tynianov poetry served the same purpose. It seems that Tynianov's desire to demystify the creation of Pushkin's elegy in the concluding part of the novel points to the fact that Tynianov was trying to weave autobiographical overtones into his monumental biography of Pushkin, thereby undermining its epic qualities. Thus Tynianov's novel creates an illusion that, for Pushkin, poetry may have accomplished the same role as religion, embodying the sublime spirit of life that enables individuals to engage in a collective process of mourning and recollection of the object of their loss. The novel evokes, most of all, the images of freedom, youth and vibrant creativity, bringing to the fore Pushkin's thoughts in exile that enabled him to feel estranged from the past and everything that repressed him. The optimistic overtones embedded in the concluding parts of the novel derive from Tynianov's Bergsonian belief in the immortality and vibrancy of the creative impulse found in Pushkin's poetic speech.

If we bear in mind Tynianov's formalist past and his concerns expressed in "Illusionary Pushkin", then Tynianov's *Pushkin* that demystifies Pushkin and contains strong melancholic overtones appears to stand in stark contrast to the official canonisation of Pushkin in the 1930s, especially because of its reinforcement of the Bergsonian paradigm of Russian Formalism that revolves around the concept of evolution and parody. As James Curtis observes, for Tynianov "parody serves a kind of historical baring of the device" and "a work of parody embodies the indivisible heterogeneity of *durée*".⁵⁴ Curtis establishes Tynianov's debt to Bergson and asserts that Tynianov's dynamic model of literary evolution is shaped by Bergson's vision of the interaction between the past and present that challenges the automatised perception and mechanical reproduction of artefacts. Thus, in his seminal study "On Literary Evolution" ("O literaturnoi evoliutsii") Tynianov argues that all important elements of literary evolution, including style and *sujet*, "are coordinated among themselves and interact".⁵⁵ As Tynianov puts it, "if the feeling of *interaction* of two factors (which presupposes the obligatory presence of two moments: a subordinating one and a subordinated one) disappears, the fact of art is erased; it is automatised".⁵⁶ In the novel *Pushkin*, just like in his early writings, including the book on parody that Tynianov edited in 1931⁵⁷, Tynianov appears to be concerned with the mechanical reproduction of artefacts and automatised repetition of the events which he challenges by incongruous juxtaposition of the visual and verbal images in *Pushkin* as was described above. Furthermore, in the concluding part of the novel Tynianov's depiction of Pushkin, the young poet, as a person who, while moving forward, was inspired by the recollection of the past and who wouldn't dare to name the object of his secret love, imitates photoplay composition that is found in films.

According to Freeburg, "the motion picture is an ever originating series of ever vanishing aspects"⁵⁸ and the composition of photoplay comprises no-longer-seen pictures, being-seen-pictures and not-yet-seen pictures. For Freeburg, film writing was to a large extent informed by Ethel Puffer's 1907 book *The Psychology of Beauty* which states that "the beauty of an object lies in its permanent possibility of creating the perfect moment" with the effect that "the experience of this moment, the union of stimulation and repose, constitutes the unique aesthetic emotion".⁵⁹ The optimistic

overtones of the concluding part of Tynianov's novel derive from the suggestive nature of his description that requires some kind of mental montaging. The final allusion to an unnamed image of Karamzina in the novel's final chapter breaks with the linear perception of the events, engaging readers into a reception of fact and symbol simultaneously. Tynianov's interest in the mental process which the photoplay produces in its viewers is felt in the composition of the paragraph that suggests a mental pause invoked by the reference to the past experiences of which Pushkin was deprived. The cinematic nature of Tynianov's description echoes Münsterberg's explanation of the effect that depth and movement of moving images have on the audience. He writes: "Depth and movement alike come to us in the moving picture world. Not as hard facts but as a mixture of fact and symbol. They are present and yet they are not in the things. We invest the impressions with them. The theatre has both depth and motion, without any subjective help; the screen has them and yet lacks them. We see things distant and moving, but we furnish to them more than we receive; we create the depth and the continuity through our mental mechanism".⁶⁰ The concluding part of Tynianov's novel aims at bringing together depth and motion in order to animate Pushkin's life, and to project the intensity of his feelings inscribed into Pushkin's elegiac poem onto the Russia of the 1930s.

It is not coincidental that the most enthusiastic response to *Pushkin* was expressed in Eisenstein's letter to Tynianov. This praises the theme of Pushkin's secret love interwoven into novel as a most successful device which presents the image of Karamzina as a perfect prototype for all subsequent love affairs of Pushkin. In his seminal study of film and intertextuality *The Memory of Tiresias: Intertextuality and Film* (Pamiat' Tiresieia), Iampolskii describes Eisenstein's film as a kind of analytic vivisection presupposed by the physiognomic reading of the principles of the director's work in order to uncover 'the skeleton'. Iampolskii convincingly argues that Tynianov's novel *Pushkin* and his works on Pushkin and literary evolution had a considerable impact on Eisenstein's vision of a hero as intertextual body and of the concept of ersatz based on the metonymic substitution of various objects that Eisenstein describes in terms similar to musical terms of theme and leitmotif. To Eisenstein, the concept of invisible text as universal equivalent employed in Tynianov's *Pushkin* sheds light on the mechanism of montaging that enables objects to be linked and their substitution in accordance with their relevance to the abstract ideal model construed in a Platonian sense.⁶¹ In other words, both Tynianov and Eisenstein shared a vision of Pushkin as intertextual hero whose discursive framework was highly relevant for the artists of the 1920-30s. To them, Pushkin's poetry was cinematic. Yet in Stalin's Russia of the late 1930-40s neither Eisenstein nor Tynianov could formulate a coherent autonomous approach to art and further develop any concepts of the inter-relationship between visual and verbal modes widely discussed in the works of Russian Formalists in the 1920s. In fact, the resurrection of Pushkin's cult in the mid-1930s by Soviet ideologists and cultural leaders must have reminded Tynianov of his 1922 "The Illusionary Pushkin" in which he voiced his concerns for the hermeneutic approach to literature.

More importantly, Eisenstein's highly insightful reading of Tynianov's last novel is informed by his own Pushkin myth which he wanted to reflect in his unrealised film. As Oksana Bulgakova convincingly argues in her analysis of the importance of the Pushkin myth to Eisenstein's creative outlook of the 1930s, Eisenstein appropriated the image of Pushkin as his mask that could help him to depict Stalin's Russia allegorically, through presenting Pushkin's life in terms of a conflict between evil father figures and young artist.⁶²

Eisenstein's intention was to present Pushkin's life as something that evolved around the idea of ersatz, demonstrating thereby that his unrequited love for Karamzina led Pushkin to see all-powerful older rivals and authoritative father-like figures (including Peter the Great and the tsars) as symbols of destruction and death. As Bulgakova points out, Tynianov's triangle, that included Pushkin, Karamzin and his wife, provides Eisenstein with a biographical detail that informs his vision of Pushkin as a person who wanted to sublimate the traumatic experiences related to his secret love. In Eisenstein's opinion, all Pushkin works are permeated with the motif of rivalry between death and life, old age and youth, tsar and poet.⁶³ In other words, Eisenstein equates Pushkin with the figure of Don Juan understood by him in Freudian terms. Eisenstein sees a Don Juan-like Pushkin as aspiring to relive his experience in order to overcome the trauma of unhappy youth, and resorts to staging his numerous love affairs as an attempt to restore the wholeness. Indeed, Pushkin's Don Juan might be seen as an actor caught in the act of becoming while searching for his true identity.

In his analysis of Pushkin's Don Juan, David Kropf defines Don Juan's adventures as adjustments that help him to attain his new self. Kropf says: "When Don Juan composes (creates) a new self, he is in fact composes (adjusts) his entire being: composition as composure. He effects adjustments in his body and his voice in terms of a specific woman he desires. The 'real' world in which these adjustments occur has a decisive role to play, because multiple aspects of it (not just the woman, but the language she speaks, the social class to which she belongs, the environment she inhabits, and so on) enter the work of art Don Juan makes of himself. He does not imitate but rather interconnects with a specific situation and state of affairs".⁶⁴ Don Juan's art at mimicry, sublimation and creative estrangement from himself are echoed both in Eisenstein's vision of Pushkin, whom the director equates with Chaplin,⁶⁵ and in Tynianov's presentation of a young Pushkin who is versed in the art of parody and prelogical thought. Thus, the statement at the end of *Pushkin* that life flows as a poem might be seen as an expression of the belief in the creative powers of sublimation and estrangement presented in the novel in psychoanalytic terms. This approach to Pushkin stood in opposition to the official attempts to mould a life-asserting and politically correct image of the national poet.

According to Svetlana Adon'eva's study of Soviet and post-Soviet rituals enacted in everyday life, prior to 1935 the performance of several plays either dedicated to Pushkin, or based on his works, was banned by Soviet censors.⁶⁶ However, in 1935 a special Pushkin committee was created with the view to plan and control various activities linked to the 1937 centenary anniversary of the poet's death. The 64th Resolution on 29 December 1935 of the Central Executive of the USSR headed by Maxim Gorky referred to Pushkin as the great Russian poet, creator of the Russian language and father of modern Russian literature, whose immortal writings contributed to the development of all mankind.⁶⁷ Yet, Tynianov's *Pushkin* reinstated the Formalist project aiming at the autonomous status of literature and dispersed the myth of Pushkin the creator of Russian language who shaped development of Russian national culture for many years to come. As Tynianov points out, "Russian Formalists were the first to see literature as an autonomous domain for theoretical investigation, and in their work they steered away from aesthetics, sociology, psychology, and history, while seeking support in linguistics. There were, in Germany, earlier attempts to take an autonomous approach to art, but these involved music and the visual arts rather than literature. Heinrich Wölfflin's dream of a history of art without names was echoed in Osip Brik's belief that, had Pushkin never existed, *Eugene Onegin* would

have written itself.”⁶⁸

Given Tynianov’s explanation that “by concentrating on the literary ‘device,’ especially in the early phase of their work, the Formalists were leaving literature to its own devices, uncontrolled by, and irreducible to, ethics, religion, or politics”⁶⁹, it is possible to see in Tynianov’s novel a powerful critique of Stalin’s project of modernity and detect the strong presence of the melancholic voice. In the concluding part of the novel, contrary to the expectations of the socialist realist canon, Tynianov presents a young Pushkin not as a positive hero imbued with a utopian vision of life, but as a mourning figure in the process of writing an elegy in which the solitary speaker weeps for his condition (his loss of lycée friends and unrequited love for Karamzina) and addresses his surroundings. He is aspiring to create a bond of sympathy between the suffering self and a melancholy of nature.

It appears that in *Pushkin* we find an epistemological shift in Tynianov’s artistic psychology: the ‘dialectical’ Tynianov is replaced in the novel by ‘organic’ Tynianov. His mournful image of Pushkin might be seen as an insightful portrayal of Tynianov’s own self who subsumes the dialectic into a romanticised whole and solipsistically projects himself onto the rest of the world, eradicating thereby the structure of difference. Tynianov’s *Pushkin* contains veiled responses to the civilising violence of the 1930-40s that, in the words of Caryl Emerson, “was expected to purge the individual body, as well as the body politic, of its impurities” to the effect that the chaotic and neurotic body “could help to be healed by the punitive hand of Stalinist discipline”.⁷⁰ In her excellent comparative study of the aesthetics based on pain as manifested in the writings of Bakhtin and Shklovsky, Emerson suggests that by 1938 Bakhtin’s own body was turned into a Stalinist-era text, because his leg amputation would have been perceived as something normal, given the cult of the missing leg and patriotic heroic suffering. It is precisely in this context that Tynianov’s critique of Stalinist narratives obsession with the motif of lameness should be read. Conversely, Tynianov’s name could be easily added to the list of scholars who advocated the Formalist and Dialogic aesthetic methods and whose aim was to subdue terror and cultivate respect and freedom. Emerson writes: “For all their dissimilar placement of subject and object, and for all the fundamental differences between the Formalist and Dialogic methods, Shklovsky and Bakhtin were equally sceptical of a Marxist or materialist model that could turn human material into an instrument toward some other end. They were also sceptical of an ethics of identity, which would collapse the space in between and reduce reality to an echo chamber, out of which no creative act could emerge”.⁷¹ Tynianov’s novel also rebels against the mechanical reproduction of the usable past that turns Pushkin’s body into an instrument of automatisisation and normalisation of writing.

¹ For the discussion of Tynianov’s invention of the genre of the scientific novel that merges literary history and literary biography see Angela Britlinger’s excellent study: Britlinger, Angela. *Writing a Usable Past: Russian Literary Culture, 1917-1937*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2000.

² Sandler, Stephanie. “The Pushkin Myth in Russia”, in Bethea, David M. *The Pushkin Handbook*, Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005, pp. 403-423, p. 403.

³ Tynianov, Iurii. “Mnimyi Pushkin”, in Tynianov, Iu. N. *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino*, Moscow: Nauka, 1977, pp.78-92, p.78. (Translations from the Russian, here and elsewhere, are my own.)

⁴ Tihanov, Galin. "Why Did Modern Literary Theory Originate in Central and Eastern Europe? (And Why Is It Now Dead?)", *Common Knowledge*, volume 10, issue 1, 2004, p.66.

⁵ Aitken, Ian. *European Film Theory and Cinema: A Critical Introduction*, Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2001, p.8.

⁶ Ibid., p.9.

⁷ Quoted in: Brewster, Ben. "From Shklovsky to Brecht: A Reply", *Screen*, Summer 1974, vol.15, no.2, p.87.

⁸ Jakobson, Roman. "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," in *Style in Language. Conference on Style, Indiana University, 1958*, [ed. Thomas A. Sebeok], Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960, pp. 353-59. See also his 1935 essay, "The Dominant," reprinted in *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, [ed. Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska], Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1978, pp. 82-87.

⁹ Ibid., p.79.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.92.

¹¹ Kozintsev, Grigorii. "Iurii Tynianov", in *Iurii Tynianov, pisatel', uchenyi: Vospominaniia, razmyshleniia, vstrechi*, Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1976, pp.166-75, p.170. Quoted in English in: Sosa, Michael. "Gogol' from the 1920s: Tynianov's Scenario for *Shinel'*", *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol.30, No.4, winter 1986, pp.553-558, p.556.

¹² Renfrew, Alastair. "Against Adaptation: The Strange Case of (Pod) *Poruchik Kizhe*", volume 10, issue 1, winter 2004, pp.61-81, p.160.

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